



Matt Wellslager, Chair
Scott Perkins, Deputy Chair

June 12, 2013

Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D.

Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 6217
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Sullivan:

The Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP) is pleased to report on our semiannual meeting, which occurred via webinar, the afternoons of May 7 and May 8, 2013.

The panel was very pleased that you took the time to speak to us on *NOAA's Vision and the Role of NOAA's Navigation Services*. Having the opportunity to engage with you on key HSRP issues is very beneficial and much appreciated. Your personal interest is most welcome and demonstrates a continuing improvement in our working relations with NOAA's senior leadership. It is the feeling of the panel that you understand the critical need for the data, products, and services created and disseminated by NOAA's navigations services offices.

During the first day, Dr. Bamford defined for the panel the new NOS messaging around *Positioning America for the Future*. From this briefing the panel was able to walk away with the knowledge that NOAA has listened to the panel's recommendations pertaining to the Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping (IOCM) effort, the PORTS[®] program, and Gravity for the Redefinition of the American Vertical Datum (GRAV-D) and the Administration's efforts to put them into action. On day two, Dr. Bamford returned to participate in a "Report Out" session. Topics for the report out included mention of the HSRP Chair and Vice Chair contacting other Federal advisory committees (FAC) to discuss members participating in meetings. Of the seven FACs contacted, five (USCG Navigation Safety Advisory Council, FGDC National Geospatial Advisory Committee, NOAA Science Advisory Board, IOOS Advisory Committee, and the NOAA Marine Protected Area FAC) were interested in possible coordination and participation with the HSRP, and each stated that similar interests existed between the FACs.

Other items mentioned in the report out included; members of the HSRP having the opportunity to participate in webinar training sessions on the Office of Coast Survey's application on Ocean and Coastal Modeling and the National Geodetic Survey's VDATUM. VDATUM is a program that combines different datums referencing elevations for support of NAVD 88 orthometric elevations. Suggestions were made that these webinar training sessions should be made

available to the public. The HSRP also discussed Crowd-Sourced Bathymetry creating a training center for hydrography, and continued funding for GRAV-D.

The agenda for the webinar meeting was designed for the HSRP to receive briefings on the first day from NOAA, NOS, and related federal programs, such as the Committee on Marine Transportation Systems (CMTS). The scope of the second day focused on presentations from other federal agencies on key initiatives that included the Army Corps of Engineers Coastal Mapping Strategy, the U.S. Geological Survey's 3D Elevation Program and the U.S. Coast Guard's Port Access Route Studies (PARS) for the Atlantic Coast and the Bering Strait. Time was left at the end of day two to allow the HSRP time to discuss ideas for future meetings, future goals of the panel, topics for this Letter of Recommendation, and the adoption of quarterly meetings via webinar.

NOS has successfully transitioned into an organization that is striving to be more efficient and responsive to the needs of stakeholders and users. The HSRP is pleased with the progress NOAA is making as the lead of the Federal IOCM effort, which coordinates geospatial activities and saves taxpayer dollars by enhancing efficiency.

Indications are IOCM is investigating crowd sourcing and developing a crowd sourcing policy for the collection of hydrographic data. The HSRP supports this initiative. Care needs to be taken, while the idea exists that this could be a useful way of collecting data, standards and specifications exist that need to be maintained while collecting data.

- The HSRP recommends NOS investigate the possibility of developing a suite of tools that could be used to collect bathymetric data and meteorological data with the aim of creating trusted partnerships for crowd sourcing.

NOAA has hydrographic training programs, both informal, on the job training and formal, in residence graduate level education. However, these programs do not begin to address the training and education needs of NOAA, or other federal agencies and civilian activities involved mapping. With the backlog of needed hydrographic data and with the increase of catastrophic natural disasters, the requirement for additional training and education centers, as authorized in the Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act, is growing.

- As defined in the Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration, Section 12205, (C) NOAA Joint Ocean and Coastal Mapping Centers, The Administrator may maintain and operate up to 3 joint Ocean and Coastal Mapping Centers. One of these, the Joint Hydrographic Center (JHC), has been successfully established and is collocated at the University of New Hampshire. The HSRP recommends that NOAA maintain 100% of the funding for the JHC. In addition, the HSRP recommends creation and funding of a second ocean and coastal mapping center, collocated with a center for higher education, for additional hands on training and formalized education.
- With sequestration enacted, the HSRP understands NOAA will have to face cutbacks. At the same time, in an attempt to maintain the quality of products the user community has come to expect, consideration needs to be made on how best to manage these issues. The three Program Offices of NOS under the purview of HSRP, CO-OPS, NGS and OCS,

have all suffered loss of staff. It was brought to the attention of the panel the NGS is currently operating with an approximate 20% reduction of staff. Can efforts be taken to help mitigate this problem? It is understood that it would be impossible to rehire all of the open positions. However, can steps be taken to initiate the process of hiring personnel to fill some of the open positions?

- The HSRP recommends the hiring freeze be lifted to fill 10 to 20 open geodesist positions.

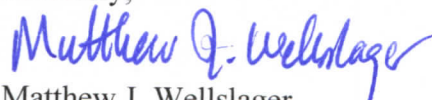
The panel would like to provide feedback and recommendations on the virtual FAC meeting format. The HSRP Coordinator and staff did a great job administrating this webinar meeting and creating a modified agenda. This was the first public webinar meeting for this panel. Conducting this type of meeting format was a challenge - both logistically and technically for the panel and staff. The webinar platform used was adequate, but a more robust platform should be investigated if future webinars are envisioned. Webinar meetings need to have a focused scope; therefore, the decision to hold a webinar must be made early so that the agenda is properly scoped from the outset. Colocation of the panel Chair and vice Chair, together with the DFO and NOAA's navigation services office directors will significantly improve the panel's capability for in-person dialogue to develop targeted, meaningful recommendations for NOAA leadership. The panel recommends for future HSRP public webinar meetings that NOAA provide travel support for the HSRP Chair and vice Chair to be present with the DFO and NOAA navigation service office directors.

While an HSRP webinar is a viable tool for meetings and conferences, the webinar does not replace direct face to face interaction between the panel members of the HSRP and stakeholders that use NOAA products. Public participation was high during this webinar, more so than with past conferences. However, the participation was callers listening to the presentations and saying very little. The need for direct dialogue with the maritime community is critical for the panel to capture the essence of the human interaction with NOAA leadership, the DFO, and the navigation services office directors on the future direction of the panel. This is accomplished best by conducting meetings at U.S. Ports with stakeholder panel discussions and public comment sessions.

In closing, the HSRP will start conducting quarterly webinar/teleconference meetings. It was seen by the panel as a tool to help facilitate communications and progress for actions identified in the biannual meetings. Each meeting would focus on a themed topic such as the PORTS[®] business model, the Arctic, re-invigorating the HSRP white paper for distribution on Capitol Hill, and developing a critical needs list for NOAA Administration.

Once again, the HSRP greatly appreciates your participation and engagement in our webinar meeting, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Wellslager
HSRP Chair